

# TALE FEATHERS

St. Louis Audubon Society, P.O. Box 220227, St. Louis, MO 63122-0227  
www.stlouisaudubon.org director@stlouisaudubon.org (314) 599-7390

## Calendar

### BEGINNER BIRD WALK FIELD TRIPS

FOREST PARK VISITOR CENTER

FIRST SATURDAY OF EVERY MONTH AT 815 AM

Special walk just for the new and/or casual watchers.

Reservations not required, but for further info contact Chris at [birding@forestparkforever.org](mailto:birding@forestparkforever.org).

### BIRDING FIELD TRIP—PAGE 3

RIVERLANDS MBS AND COLUMBIA BOTTOM CA

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 6<sup>TH</sup> AT 8A

ALL DAY TRIP LOOKING FOR WINTERING BIRDS.

### BIRDING FIELD TRIP—PAGE 3

BALDWIN LAKE AND PEABODY COAL PLANT IN ILLINOIS

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 13<sup>TH</sup> AT 9A

ALL DAY TRIP WITH CARPOOL OPTION.

### GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT

CITIZEN SCIENCE MID-WINTER BIRD CENSUS

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 12<sup>TH</sup> THRU MONDAY FEBRUARY 15<sup>TH</sup>

SEE [WWW.BIRDCOUNT.ORG](http://WWW.BIRDCOUNT.ORG) FOR MORE DETAILS.

### WINTER BIRD FESTIVAL AT CREVE COEUR PARK

CREVE COEUR LAKEHOUSE AT 2160 CREVE COEUR MILL RD

SUNDAY FEBRUARY 14<sup>TH</sup> FROM 11 AM TO 3 PM

BIRD WALKS, DISPLAYS AND KID-FRIENDLY ACTIVITIES. FREE

SEE PAGE 6 FOR MORE DETAILS.

### FEBRUARY MONTHLY PROGRAM—PAGE 5

INTERIOR LEAST TERN PROJECT AT RIVERLANDS

TUESDAY FEBRUARY 16<sup>TH</sup> AT 7P

CREVE COEUR COMMUNITY CENTER AT 300 N. NEW BALLAS

### WETLAND RESTORATION WORK DAY

CREVE COEUR LAKE MEMORIAL PARK

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 20<sup>TH</sup> FROM 9A TO 1P

TO REGISTER, CONTACT MITCH AT [STLAUDUBON@CHARTER.NET](mailto:STLAUDUBON@CHARTER.NET)

OR (314) 599-7390 WITH YOUR NAME & PHONE NUMBER

### BIRDING FIELD TRIP—PAGE 3

BUSCH WOODCOCK AND OWL PROWL

SATURDAY MARCH 13<sup>TH</sup> AT 5P

GOOD TRIP FOR BEGINNERS TO EXPERIENCE THESE BIRDS.

### MARCH MONTHLY PROGRAM—PAGE 5

SO MANY FEATHERS FILM SHOWING

THURSDAY MARCH 25<sup>TH</sup> AT 730P

LEARNING LAB AT FOREST PARK VISITOR CENTER

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## *The Mighty Miss and the Louisiana Coast*

By Chris Ferree

*The first of a series...*

The plentiful and varied birds we see in St. Louis have costal Louisiana to thank. As bird migrants traverse the Gulf of Mexico from Central and South America, most are aiming for the delta region at the mouth of the Mississippi. The Mississippi River, from headwaters to Gulf, forms a flat, unobstructed flyway for birds to reach breeding grounds throughout the United States and into the far reaches of Canada—a bird “port of entry.” Many of our waterfowl, shorebirds and summer resident birds also spend the winter in southern Louisiana. The major habitat types include barrier islands, costal marshes, maritime forests and cypress–tupelo swamps.

As is the case with all wildlife habitats, these water-based systems maintain an intricate balance of shelter and habitat for breeding and migrant birds; yet all of them, and their dependent birds, are in serious decline and at risk of being lost. While many factors contribute to this threat, the loss of sediments in the Mississippi River Delta far outweighs all others. Over millennia, sediments in the River formed the Delta and much of coastal Louisiana. It is not until recent history that humans have intervned to change this natural process and significantly alter the Delta and much of the Coast.

*See Mighty Miss on Page 4*

## Board Meetings

Open to All. 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday of Every Month at 7 pm. Powder Valley Nature Center at 11715 Cragwold.

Board recruitment is an ongoing process and requires your interest and our need. If you have thought of serving in such a way, stop by or call one of us.

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[director@stlouisaudubon.org](mailto:director@stlouisaudubon.org)

## Newsletter

*TaleFeathers* is published monthly. For submissions, comments or corrections, contact Mitch Leachman as noted above.



[www.earthsharemo.org](http://www.earthsharemo.org) for more info.

## Eagle Days a Hit Once More

By Dave Rogles

The deep freeze of January thawed the week before and Eagle Days at the Old Chain of Rocks Bridge benefited with nearly 4,500 visitors. The Chapter's volunteers again manned our hands-on display tables all weekend and provided answers about eagles and other birds of Missouri.

Children were genuinely interested in all the specimens: the small warblers, the woodpeckers, and the large predators. To touch and feel an actual creature of nature was a big hit for old and young alike.

Unquestionably the biggest attraction was a perched adult Peregrine Falcon, sitting above the tent at the center of the bridge for more than 30 minutes. Mike Thelen treated everyone to "up close and personal" looks with his scope—looks that are very rare on most occasions.

While eagle numbers were low, several birds flew by the bridge and often birds could be viewed sitting on the trees that line the River. A large sandbar was also a popular resting and feeding area for several birds.

Many thanks to all our volunteers and to MDC and Trailnet for making it happen. We hope to see you next year at the Bridge! ♦



*Children at the Audubon display table*

*Karen Meyer Photo*



*Peregrine Falcon on Bridge*

*Mike Thelen Photo*

## From the Director

By Mitch Leachman

The St. Louis Region is shaped by, and largely defined by, rivers—the Mississippi and Missouri, of course, but don't forget the Illinois, the Meramec, the Kaskaskia and others. This is too rarely appreciated. Yet, our general apathy toward these rivers should be expected for we have invested much to separate ourselves from them. High and mighty bridges get us around them. Dams and levees try to “control” them. Agencies manage them, and entire industries exist to prevent us from having to interact with them.

Our attitude toward the rivers is in contrast to our society's dependence upon them for drinking water, commerce, construction material, and even food. In addition, their channels, tributaries, banks and islands provide habitat for thousands of species of plants and animals—including of course feeding and breeding habitat for many of the birds we love to watch. Hence the dilemma and the opportunity—we are largely discouraged from interacting with the rivers, yet have great dependence upon them and their habitats.

St. Louis Audubon, Audubon Missouri and other organizations see the opportunity and are working hard to reconnect people with our rivers. Many of our current projects support that goal. We supported a City of Valley Park grant application that would restore habitat and provide additional passive recreation opportunities along the Meramec River. The Education Team and our partners at Forest Park will play a big part in the 2010 Wings of Spring festival that will connect school kids and the public to birds at several river locations over the peak week of migration. Karen Meyer and our conservation team continue to work with the Common Sense Coalition to block the Riverview Casino project due to its impact on the adjacent Columbia Bottom Conservation Area at the Confluence. Also, we continue to plan for habitat restoration workdays and public outreach events at Creve Coeur Park (see the Winter Bird Festival info on page 6).

In addition, St. Louis Audubon was invited to attend an all-expense paid Tour of Coastal Louisiana in mid January and hosted by National Wildlife Federation and National Audubon. Chris Ferree and I attended. The Tour was designed to educate the attendees, all drawn from Audubon groups within the Mississippi River Basin, on the processes of, and issues facing, the Mississippi River system in costal Louisiana and how both are directly connected to our hometowns. The Tour ended with a workshop that covered various ways we could use that hometown connection to positively affect change in the River. Chris provides an initial primer on the troubles of the Louisiana Coast in the first article of a series on pages 1 and 4. I hope in reading it you will see another example of how intimately connected we are to the rivers around us! ◆

## Field Trips, Etc.

**February 6<sup>th</sup> at Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary and Columbia Bottom CA:** Bill Rowe will lead this full-day trip. Meet at 8 a.m. (note early time) at Riverlands. From I-270, take Hwy 367 north. Turn right on last road before the Alton Bridge—at the Fiska Gas Station. Turn right on the first road after the station to the Teal Pond lot where we will meet.

**February 13<sup>th</sup> at Baldwin Lake in Illinois:** Torrey Berger will lead this all day trip to Illinois in search of waterfowl. To carpool, meet at 9 am at the commuter lot at I-270 and Hwy 30. To drive, take I-255 to Hwy 3 in Illinois. Follow to Redbud then take

Hwy 154 to Baldwin. Follow signs to Lake Baldwin. Meet in the parking lot inside the gate.

**March 13<sup>th</sup> at Busch Memorial Conservation Area:** Sue Gustafson and John Solodar will lead this evening Woodcock and Owl Prowl. Meet at 5 p.m. (note the time). Take Hwy 94 south from Hwy 40. At 1.3 miles, turn right at light for Hwy D. Go 2 miles to entrance on right. Turn left at T to Hampton Lake and meet in lot.

All field trips are FREE. Reservations not required, unless noted—consult our website for details. Contact Pat Lueders with general questions at (314) 359-9364.

## The Mighty Miss and the Louisiana Coast

*Continued from Page 1*

The Mississippi in coastal Louisiana is channelized to provide efficient shipping lanes for the largest and one of the busiest ports in the U.S. This “port of entry” is as important to birds as it is to human commerce in North America. From this port an enormous amount of goods are brought into or shipped out of the U.S. The maintenance of this single, deep shipping channel is unnatural and defies the natural meandering and shifting nature of such a large river. The historic Mississippi River would shift over time and deposit sediment throughout the region, keeping a natural balance between land building and coastal erosion. With channelization, sediment is retained within the main water column due to its speed and lack of access to alternate, slower channels due to levees. At the mouth of the River on the Gulf Coast, sediments are quite literally shot past the shallow historic delta (like a water cannon) and into deep water off the continental shelf. Any dredged material from this channel is either dumped off of the continental shelf or piled up as spoils along the river banks helping to further force the river into this channel.



*Nelson's Sparrow*

*David Ringer Photo*

Without fresh water and land-building sediment, coastal habitats become victim to salt water intrusion that can quickly kill maritime forests and even cypress-tupelo swamps. Loss of sediment also alters the shallow water inland marshes that become too deep to support plant life and become open water. Barrier islands then erode as they lose the protection of the inland marshes. Delta and coastal habitats are all interdependent—the degradation or loss of one often affects the same or worse in others. The loss of these habitats directly effects the migrating and over-wintering bird populations that depend upon them.

We were fortunate to see firsthand some of those over-wintering birds and their habitat as part of a coastal field trip included with the Tour. In the inland marshes, we had great looks at Nelson's Sparrow and Seaside Sparrow—both life birds for me. In the same area, we had many sightings of Roseate Spoonbills, White and Glossy Ibis, and Little Blue Herons. A Tri-colored Heron made a grand appearance across the road from our bathroom stop at a gas station. Finally, a Clapper Rail appeared, as if on cue, no more than 20 feet from us and leisurely swam and walked about with no apparent notice of us.

Even while traveling at 40 miles an hour in a tour bus it was easy to pick out Double-breasted Cormorant, Common Loon, American Anhinga, and Osprey. Peregrine Falcons seemed to be on every water and cell tower in the area. The best highlight was another life bird for me. While walking through a small piece of Live Oak maritime forest the group flushed a Barn Owl overwintering in this highly endangered habitat. All the birds and their habitats were simply amazing—far too special to allow their loss due to a lack of sediment!

The complexities of the River are many, as will be its restoration. Please watch future issues of *TaleFeathers* for additional information on both. In the meantime, you can study the River on your own at the following websites. ♦

*Coastal Marsh*

*David Ringer  
Photo*



### ***The Interior Least Tern at Riverlands***

Tuesday, February 16, 2010 at 7:00 p.m.

Creve Coeur Community Center

Join us on February 16<sup>th</sup> as Sarah Miller, biologist with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, presents the first year results of the Interior Least Tern Floating Habitat Project, located at the Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary in West Alton, Missouri. As you may recall from the August *TaleFeathers*, the project experienced dramatic success with over 20 nestlings from at least 12 nesting pairs of Terns. Sarah will provide background on the Least Tern and its population status, describe the project in detail including plans for the coming nesting season, and outline important ways birders can contribute.

Sarah Miller is a Biologist for the Environmental Stewardship Section of the Rivers Project Office, working on the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers. She has a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology and Environmental Science and a Masters degree in Environmental Science. She has been with the Environmental Stewardship Section for five years.

This is our annual joint meeting with the Webster Groves Nature Study Society. From I-270 and Ladue, go east on Ladue, left at the light at New Ballas, go ¼ mile north to the Creve Coeur Government Center at 300 N. New Ballas. Community Center is in the northwest corner of the lower level (closest to Olive and Ballas). Questions, call Mitch Leachman at (314)-599-7390. ♦



*Interior Least Terns*

*USACE Photo*

### ***So Many Feathers: Bird Watching Without Binoculars!***

Thursday, March 25, 2010 at 7:30 p.m.

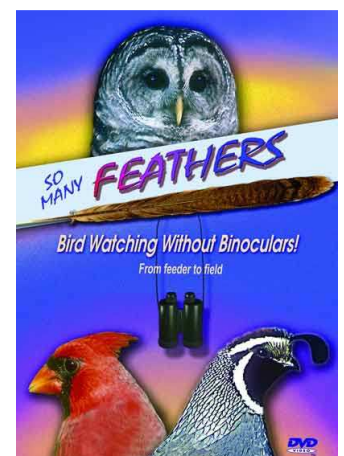
This hour-long documentary showcases a host of birds found throughout North America and right here in Missouri. All of it produced by Steve Maslowski, second-generation documentary film-maker and cameramen for the *Amazing Birds of America* production.

From the birds in your own backyard to birds of the prairie and desert, you are sure to see something new—barn owl feeding its young, ruffed grouse drumming and a northern goshawk calling. Singing, courting, nesting, soaring—it's all captured here. For you birders, just a few of the treats include: long-billed curlew, white-headed woodpecker, black skimmer, snowy owl and Swainson's warbler. This is just in time for warmer weather and the start of spring migration.

This program continues a partnership between St. Louis Audubon and the Eastern Missouri Group of the Sierra Club. The evening is open to all, members or not.

The Dennis & Judith Jones Visitor Center, at 5595 Grand Drive, is just east of the Missouri History Museum at Lindell and DeBaliviere and easily accessed via the Forest Park MetroLink stop. The program will be held in the Learning Lab.

Questions, call Mitch Leachman at (314) 599-7390. ♦



## Riverlands Trip Report—January 9<sup>th</sup>

By Mike Thelen

With a starting temperature of 2 F (–9 F wind chill) Riverlands was mostly frozen from border to border but there were a few pockets of bird activity on both land and water. Several hundred sleepy birds congregated in one of the few areas of open water in Ellis Bay, with 80 TRUMPETER SWAN and at least 1, and possibly 3 additional, TUNDRA SWAN. There was a small variety of ducks in Ellis Bay, on the river and in the Illinois Hwy 143 slough including GADWALL, 1 AMERICAN BLACK DUCK, MALLARD, 8 GREEN-WINGED TEAL, 2 CANVASBACK, 4 GREATER SCAUP, 50 COMMON GOLDENEYE and 1 male HOODED MERGANSER. Only 1 GREAT BLUE HERON for the trip, and very few gull individuals represented only by RING-BILLED and HERRING.

BALD EAGLE was few in number and we had 3 NORTHERN HARRIER, including 1 male at the Rivers Project office. The RPO was open and the group had the opportunity to see the new Audubon Center building plans and warm up a little while watching the birds under the feeders, mainly SAVANNAH and WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW, with 1 LAPLAND LONGSPUR. 1 NORTHERN FLICKER near the observation tower. HORNED LARK was common along the Confluence Rd. where we watched several flocks of LAPLAND LONGSPUR, collectively about 200. 1 PEREGRINE FALCON swept by while we were on the road and disappeared somewhere around the equipment building.

Sparrows included 40 SAVANNAH SPARROW, 2 FOX SPARROW, only 1 each of SONG SPARROW, SWAMP SPARROW and DARK-EYED JUNCO. 1 EASTERN MEADOWLARK rounded out a modest list of 36 species for the trip, attended by 10 birders. ◆

## Family-Friendly *Winter Bird Festival* at Creve Coeur Park

Our first annual Winter Bird Festival will be held at Creve Coeur Park on Sunday, February 14<sup>th</sup> from 11am to 3 pm and will include guided bird walks, informational displays and fun activities for kids of all ages even including a bird scavenger hunt. Our partners and exhibitors include the Webster Groves Nature Study Society, Wild Bird Rehabilitation and Wild Birds Unlimited–Warson Woods location.

The event and all activities, including the bird walks, are FREE. However, advance registration is requested for the walks by sending your name, phone and number attending to Karen at [conservation@stlouisaudubon.org](mailto:conservation@stlouisaudubon.org) or by calling her at (314) 602-7318. This event directly supports the Great Backyard Bird Count taking place the entire weekend from Friday, February 12, through Monday, February 15, 2010. We hope to have a computer on-hand that will allow you to see how easy it is to record your observations and participate in this continent-wide citizen science effort. For more info about the GBBC, please visit [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org).

**Where:** Creve Coeur Lake Memorial Park – meet at the Lakehouse Restaurant at 2160 Creve Coeur Mill Road

**When:** 11am to 3pm on Sunday, February 14<sup>th</sup>

**What:** FREE coffee & hot chocolate, displays and activities INSIDE the Lakehouse Restaurant

**Bird Walks:** Begin at 11:30am, 1pm and 2:30pm. Please register in advance as noted above. ◆

*Birding at  
Creve Coeur  
Park*

*Photo by Bryan  
Prather*





Photo by Mike Thelen

St. Louis Audubon Society  
**Annual Awards Dinner**  
 Saturday, April 10<sup>th</sup>

**TIMOTHY R. BARKSDALE, BIRDMAN PRODUCTIONS, LLC**

We are pleased to announce our 2010 Annual Awards Dinner will take place at Orlando Gardens at 2050 Dorsett Village Plaza in Maryland Heights on Saturday, April 10th. Awards will be presented for Conservation, Outstanding Educator, Outstanding Volunteer, and Lifetime Achievement. The evening will conclude with our keynote speaker, Tim Barksdale,

principal cameraman for Birdman Productions, LLC. Tim will deliver an engaging, multi-media presentation on the current plight of, and hope for, the Greater Prairie Chicken—the subject of his current film project for PBS.

Tim Barksdale has been filming birds and other wildlife for nearly 20 years and has built the largest stock footage library of North American birds in the world. His past collection, of more than 1,200 species, formed the foundation of the Macaulay Library video archive at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. His current passion, the Greater Prairie Chicken, is listed **red** on the 2007 Audubon Watchlist and **critically imperiled** by the Missouri Department of Conservation. With less than 1/10<sup>th</sup> of 1% of native prairie left in the State, the Prairie Chicken has just a few, intensively-managed breeding locations remaining. Tim has traveled to the bird's strongholds in Minnesota, Nebraska and Kansas while also documenting the restoration efforts of the Missouri Prairie Foundation and MDC here at home. He is distressed, yet upbeat having witnessed in his youth flocks of over 200 birds—sustaining populations are possible!

Please join us for this viewing of Tim's stunning work and learn about this amazing prairie emblem.

- 6:00 p.m.—Registration / Open Bar
- 7:00 p.m.—Dinner Service and Award Presentations
- 8:30 p.m.—Keynote Presentation by Tim Barksdale

Please note there will not be a business meeting at this year's event. We have scheduled our annual business meeting, including the election of officers, prior to the April program on Tuesday, April 20<sup>th</sup>.

The cost is just \$25 per person. Reservations are required—please use the form below.

Space is limited, so please register by April 1st to insure you can enjoy this wonderful evening!

Orlando Gardens is at 2050 Dorsett Village Plaza in Maryland Heights, just off I-270 and Dorsett in St. Louis County. Take I-270 Exit 17, Dorsett Rd and go west on Dorsett 1/3 mile to McKelvey. Turn right on McKelvey (at the Walgreen's) for quick jog to main Plaza entrance on your left (opposite the Dairy Queen). ♦

**Saturday, April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2010 Annual Dinner Registration Form**

Please mail this form or a copy by April 1<sup>st</sup> with payment to: Mitch Leachman, 2728 Lakeport Drive, Maryland Heights, MO 63043. Make checks payable to **St. Louis Audubon Society**.

-----	\$25.00 x ----- = -----
Name(s)	Fee                  No.          Total Enclosed

## Many Thanks to All Our 2009 Donors!!

Board President Dave Rogles, Executive Director Mitch Leachman, and the entire Board of Directors extend their heartfelt thanks for your financial support this past year. You are critical to our success!

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## Call for Award Nominations

Each year, St. Louis Audubon offers awards for excellence in several different areas, and members are invited to submit nominations in the following categories:

### **Outstanding Natural Resource Legislator**

Honors an individual who has made a significant difference in the actions of government at the local, state, or national level impacting the conservation of birds, other wildlife, and their habitats.

### **St. Louis Audubon Education Award**

Honors an individual, group or organization that has significantly contributed over many years to educating our community on birds and wildlife conservation in general, so people can appreciate and make informed decisions about our natural world. **[2010 awardee has been selected]**

### **St. Louis Audubon Conservation Award**

Honors an individual, group or organization that has significantly contributed over many years to the conservation of birds, other wildlife, and their habitats through professional service, volunteerism, or communications.

### **Robert J. Terry Lifetime Achievement Award**

The highest award conferred by our Society, this award honors a member of the St. Louis Audubon Society for his or her many years of dedication, commitment and leadership in service to our Audubon Society and the natural resource community.

If you would like to nominate someone in the above areas, please send a written description of why you think your candidate is deserving of one of these awards. Your nomination may be sent to Lynne Breakstone by mail at 7220 Princeton, St. Louis, MO 63130 or e-mail at [breaksl@wustl.edu](mailto:breaksl@wustl.edu) by March 1<sup>st</sup>.

Name:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Address:  
\_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip:  
\_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail or Phone (if desired):  
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Make checks payable to:  
**St. Louis Audubon Society**  
 Mail Checks to:  
**St. Louis Audubon Society**  
**P.O. Box 220227**  
**St. Louis, MO 63122-0227**

## St. Louis Audubon Society Chapter-Supporting Membership Form

**Mission:** *to create a community connection to nature through education and conservation.*

Your Chapter-Supporting membership runs concurrently with your National Audubon membership, if you choose to maintain the latter. To continue to receive the *Audubon* magazine, you must maintain your National membership.

\$20    \$30    \$50\*\*    \$100    Other\_\_\_\_\_

\*\* Memberships of \$50, or above, will receive a copy of Dr. Stephen Kress' *North American Birdfeeder Guide*, a \$15 value, as our gift. This 220 page book covers feeding and observing tips and includes common species profiles.

100% of your dues stay in St. Louis supporting our local efforts. All our programs are free. Thank you very much!

If already a Chapter-Supporting member, you need do nothing but accept our thanks!

**Memberships are Tax Deductible**  
*Less the \$10 Cost of the Book*

St. Louis Audubon Society  
P.O. Box 220227  
St. Louis, MO 63122-0227



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